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Lynnfield, Massachusetts

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Verizon's Network Transition from Copper to Fiber: What Consumers Need to Know

The Department of Telecommunications and Cable (DTC) issues the following advisory to Verizon residential and business customers in Lynnfield, Massachusetts with *traditional landline telephone service only*. If you are a Verizon FiOS customer, and receive your landline phone service through Comcast, or if you rely solely upon a wireless phone to make and receive calls in your home, this notice does not apply to you.

Q: What is happening to Verizon's telephone service in Lynnfield, Massachusetts?

A: Verizon is changing the equipment it uses to deliver traditional, landline telephone service to homes and businesses in Lynnfield. Specifically, Verizon will discontinue providing telephone service over copper wires running from the street to each home, instead using fiber-optic cables.

Q: Why is Verizon making this change?

A: According to Verizon, fiber optic technology is more reliable than copper. Verizon also claims that it is no longer cost-effective to maintain separate fiber and copper-based networks. But *the DTC requires that Verizon make available to all residential customers a regulated landline voice telephone service. The current price and plan you pay will remain the same.*

Q: I have received a notice from Verizon telling me that I must switch to fiber-optic telephone service to continue to receive telephone service. Can Verizon make me switch?

A: *Yes, if you wish to remain a Verizon customer. The network upgrade to fiber is not optional AND will require action to schedule an installation appointment with Verizon. However, (1) Verizon remains obligated to provide landline telephone service to all Lynnfield residents who request such service, and (2) regardless of whether Verizon provides service over copper or fiber, the DTC will continue to monitor Verizon's performance to ensure compliance with all Massachusetts requirements concerning consumer rights and protections, service quality and public safety.*

Q: What is the most significant difference between copper-based telephone service and fiber-based telephone service?

A: Fiber service relies upon an optical network terminal (ONT), which must be connected to a power source or outlet at your home or business. *If your power goes out, a backup battery connected to the ONT will provide you with backup power for a period of time.* The DTC understands that the current backup power unit Verizon intends to use holds 12 standard D batteries, which can be purchased at retailers. There is no charge for installation of the battery backup device or the initial set of batteries, but you will need to purchase replacements. *This is different from the copper network, which is self-powered and will usually remain operational in the event of a power outage. There is no change to the current price and plan you pay for your telephone service when switched to fiber based telephone service.*

Q: Are there any other differences between copper and fiber-based telephone service I should be aware of?

A: Prior to switching to fiber-based service, you should inform Verizon if you have any home monitoring equipment such as alarm systems or medical equipment that relies upon your existing phone line to ensure that it will continue to work after you make the switch. In most cases, the equipment that you currently use to place and receive calls will continue to work on the fiber network. Also, there is no change to emergency calls to 911, provided that you have power to your home or, in the event of a power outage, have not exhausted the batteries in the backup device described above. For additional information about power outages and telephone service, please visit <http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/government/oca-agencies/dtc/telecom/connected-emergencies-924-13.pdf>. 1.

Q: I've heard about Verizon FiOS—is that the same as the fiber service you have described in this notice?

A: *No. While the terms fiber and FiOS are used interchangeably at times, and both fiber-based traditional phone service and FiOS services are offered over Verizon's fiber-optic network, they are not the same.* If you upgrade your existing copper service to a fiber-optic based service *without changing your rate plan or calling features, your new service will continue to be subject to DTC regulation, and will come with certain consumer protections.* FiOS Digital Voice (FDV) telephone service is an unregulated service, and optional alternative to voice service to which the Department's consumer protection rules do not apply. Make sure you understand the difference before making any changes to your telephone service.

Q: What do the DTC's consumer protection rules cover?

A: The DTC's consumer protection rules include protection from termination for all residents certified as age 65 or older ; payment plan arrangements for those behind on their bills; medical and personal emergency protection; and an allowance of 10 free directory assistance calls monthly. A copy of the rules is provided at <http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/docs/dte/telecom/18448.pdf>. Contact the DTC hotline 1-800-392-6066 for info.

Q: How do I make sure that the consumer protection rules continue to apply to me when I switch to fiber-based telephone service?

A: If you wish to keep your existing consumer protections after the migration, be sure to clarify that you are getting a *regulated fiber telephone service product* and not an unregulated FiOS FDV voice product. The current calling plan and price you pay for telephone service will not change after your service is switched to fiber based network. Review your monthly telephone bill to ensure that no changes have occurred without your permission.

Q: Are there any other differences between FiOS and a fiber-based regulated phone service?

A: *Fiber is not FiOS. These are not the same.* Fiber optics is a type of technology that Verizon has chosen to deliver landline telephone service to you. *This fiber based telephone service remains regulated by the DTC. Therefore, the current calling plan and price you pay for telephone service will not change when you migrate to Verizon's fiber based network.* FiOS is Verizon's marketing brand for services that are typically bundled with other products, such as FDV as the voice component of the bundled service packages may be priced lower than traditional, regulated fiber based telephone service. Be aware of pricing, but understand that bundles which include *FiOS Digital Voice are considered unregulated service*. Also, if you currently have DSL for High Speed Internet (HSI), you will be required to purchase FiOS HSI, as DSL is only available over the copper network or you may want pursue other options for your HSI service. Additionally, FiOS Digital Voice does not allow third party calls or collect calls, which may be an issue for you.

If you need additional information or experience issues with your telephone service, please call or email the Department's Consumer Division at 1 800 392-6066 or consumer.complaints@state.ma.us. Additional information is available on the Department's website: <http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/government/oca-agencies/dtc-lp/>. You may also contact Verizon directly at 1 877 439-7442.